

PCT

WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION
International Bureau

INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(51) International Patent Classification 5 : B29C 59/04, 71/00, 55/00 // B29K 23:00, B29L 7:00		A1	(11) International Publication Number: WO 94/23933 (43) International Publication Date: 27 October 1994 (27.10.94)
(21) International Application Number: PCT/US94/01279 (22) International Filing Date: 4 February 1994 (04.02.94)		(81) Designated States: AU, BR, CA, CN, JP, KR, RU, European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE).	
(30) Priority Data: 08/047,807 15 April 1993 (15.04.93) US		Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i>	
(71) Applicant: MINNESOTA MINING AND MANUFACTURING COMPANY [US/US]; 3M Center, P.O. Box 33427, Saint Paul, MN 55133-3427 (US).			
(72) Inventors: HYDE, Patrick, D.; P.O. Box 33427, Saint Paul, MN 55133-3427 (US). OUDERKIRK, Andrew, J.; P.O. Box 33427, Saint Paul, MN 55133-3427 (US).			
(74) Agents: BOND, William, J. et al.; Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing Company, Office of Intellectual Property Counsel, P.O. Box 33427, Saint Paul, MN 55133-3427 (US).			
(54) Title: HEAT-SEALABLE ORIENTED WEB			
(57) Abstract			
<p>A heat-sealable oriented film or layer of a semi-crystalline thermoplastic polymer. The film has a thin, heat-sealable layer of the same thermoplastic polymer having a different heat-seal temperature, which layer is heat-sealable without requiring fusion of the entire film. There is also provided a method for producing the claimed heat-sealable film.</p>			

FOR THE PURPOSES OF INFORMATION ONLY

Codes used to identify States party to the PCT on the front pages of pamphlets publishing international applications under the PCT.

AT	Austria	GB	United Kingdom	MR	Mauritania
AU	Australia	GE	Georgia	MW	Malawi
BB	Barbados	GN	Guinea	NE	Niger
BE	Belgium	GR	Greece	NL	Netherlands
BF	Burkina Faso	HU	Hungary	NO	Norway
BG	Bulgaria	IE	Ireland	NZ	New Zealand
BJ	Benin	IT	Italy	PL	Poland
BR	Brazil	JP	Japan	PT	Portugal
BY	Belarus	KE	Kenya	RO	Romania
CA	Canada	KG	Kyrgyzstan	RU	Russian Federation
CF	Central African Republic	KP	Democratic People's Republic of Korea	SD	Sudan
CG	Congo	KR	Republic of Korea	SE	Sweden
CH	Switzerland	KZ	Kazakhstan	SI	Slovenia
CI	Côte d'Ivoire	LI	Liechtenstein	SK	Slovakia
CM	Cameroon	LK	Sri Lanka	SN	Senegal
CN	China	LU	Luxembourg	TD	Chad
CS	Czechoslovakia	LV	Latvia	TG	Togo
CZ	Czech Republic	MC	Monaco	TJ	Tajikistan
DE	Germany	MD	Republic of Moldova	TT	Trinidad and Tobago
DK	Denmark	MG	Madagascar	UA	Ukraine
ES	Spain	ML	Mali	US	United States of America
FI	Finland	MN	Mongolia	UZ	Uzbekistan
FR	France			VN	Viet Nam
GA	Gabon				

- 1 -

5

HEAT-SEALABLE ORIENTED WEB

Background and Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a process of
10 forming a thin, heat-sealable layer on an oriented web.

The use of oriented films and fibers is widespread, particularly with semi-crystalline thermoplastic polymers. These oriented products are characterized by high tensile strength and high
15 modulus. Orientation also influences crystalline order and hence the melting or softening point of the oriented polymer comprising the web. A problem with these oriented polymers is their poor heat sealability. Traditional oriented polymer films are heat sealed by
20 the entire film being thermally welded above its melting temperature. This type of heat sealing by welding results in severe shrinkage and warping in the weld region. Welding also destroys the orientation in the weld area resulting in a weakened film or web in
25 this critical area.

Efforts to make oriented semi-crystalline films heat sealable have generally focused on providing a thin layer of a heat sealable polymer on the film outer surface by coextrusion, sequential extrusion or
30 coating. However these processes are problematic in terms of manufacturability of the film and adherence between the two layers. The heat sealable layer being formed of a lower molecular weight, lower softening point and/or less crystalline polymer also typically
35 reduces the bulk tensile properties of the film. U.S. Patent No. 4,247,591 proposes coextruding a thin outer layer of a higher average molecular weight version of

- 2 -

the bulk polymer so both layers are subsequently oriented. The film is then selectively heated in these thin outer layers. The results reported allege an increase in joint strength of about 30 percent over 5 single layer oriented films with a welded joint. Problems with this process include the need for careful selective heating to ensure that the heat seal remains primarily in the high molecular weight outer layers. The process also would not be suited to thin films of 10 less than about 5 mils(127 μm).

Also of concern with oriented films are the high gloss and low abrasion resistance of these films. A series of patents are directed at providing plastic strapping for industrial packaging use. The plastic 15 strapping is formed from oriented polymeric films. The patents address the high gloss and abrasion resistance problems of these oriented films. U.S. Patent Nos. 3,394,045 and 4,428,720 propose heating the oriented film to a fusion temperature (e.g., about 475°F(246°C) 20 for polypropylene) by a flame or heated chromed roll. The depth of treatment is about 1 mil(25.4 μm). The straps can then allegedly be used like conventional steel strapping to form crimped joints. However, this process is not well suited to providing heat sealable 25 films. The high temperature and long dwell time of the treatment results in considerable oxidized species on the outer surface of the strapping, which is not a problem for crimped joints but which contaminates any heat seal joint. The high treatment temperature would 30 also make manufacturability difficult for thin films due to the tendency of relatively thick melted polymer layers to adhere to rollers and associated machinery. U.S. Patent No. 4,090,008 also reports that the above 35 patents are deficient in preventing dusting or edge fibrillation and proposes a process for sealing only the edges with a heat treatment. U.S. Patent No. 4,451,524 addresses the same fibrillation problem and

- 3 -

purposes a subsequent orientation step following fusion of the surface layer (again about 1 mil(25.4 μ m)).

U.S. Patent No. 4,822,451 summarizes various prior art film surface treatments and their effects,

5 including; corona treatment, plasma treatment, sputter-etching, E-beam treatment, flame treatment, high intensity U.V. treatment and laser treatment. The object of the treatment process discussed in this patent is to treat a very thin surface layer of a film 10 so that there is little or no chemical (except crystalline structure) or textural changes in the film polymer on the outer surface. All the summarized prior art treatments result in a change in the texture and/or chemical nature of the polymer surfaces being treated.

15 The treatment described is a high intensity, high fluence laser (e.g., excimer laser) that when used with an appropriate semi-crystalline polymer creates a, preferably, 20-250 nm thick layer of treated polymer that is in a quasi-amorphous state. The quasi- 20 amorphous state is characterized by loss of short range crystallization, but retains a limited level of long range orientation that can be seen if the treated layer is recrystallized. This treatment requires suitable matching of the laser wavelength to the absorption 25 characteristics of the polymer and does not create any texturing of the treated polymer surface which is desirable in many applications thereby limiting its applicability.

30 Summary of the Invention

The present invention provides a thin (e.g., less than about 5 mils(127 μ m) heat sealable, oriented, semi-crystalline and thermoplastic article or material such as a web, e.g., a film or film layer, and a method for 35 its production. Heat sealability is provided by a thin heat sealable surface layer of the same polymer and similar crystalline state as the bulk polymer of the

web, e.g., film or film layer. The treated surface layer is characterized by a lack of oxidized (e.g., degraded) species and typically increased surface texture. The treated film is particularly well suited 5 for use as a pressure-sensitive adhesive (PSA) tape backing.

Brief Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram of the treatment 10 process of the invention.

Fig. 2 are Glancing Wide Angle X-Ray Diffraction traces (GWAX) (1.0°) of the film of Example 2 on both a treated and a non-treated face.

Fig. 3 are Glancing Wide Angle X-Ray Diffraction 15 traces (0.5°) of the film of Example 2 on both a treated and a non-treated face.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

The present invention provides a process for 20 formation of a thin heat sealable semi-crystalline surface layer on a semi-crystalline oriented polymer article or web, e.g., an oriented film or film layer, and the article or web of that process. The process involves rapidly heating a thin layer of the oriented 25 polymer, on the outer surface of the article or web, under heat and pressure to a temperature above the melting point of the oriented semi-crystalline polymer by use of a heated textured surface, such as a heated roll for an oriented web. The heating step is of a 30 duration sufficient to treat only a 1 to 15 micron thick layer of the oriented polymer outer surface.

The invention treated surface layers, or surface 35 layer areas or regions, are characterized by a lack of oxygen containing degradation species such as obtained by typical heat treatment processes, like those described in U.S. Patent Nos. 3,394,045 or 4,495,124 or ablative processes such as described in U.S. Patent No.

- 5 -

4,417,948. Oxidized species are notably absent in the invention treated surface layer as measured by electron spectroscopy analysis (the treated surfaces typically measured from 99 to 100 percent carbon) (ESCA)(XPS) and 5 water contact angle measurements, which were typically high(measured to be 88 to 95°) compared to prior art treated surface layers(a lower contact angle indicates higher oxygen content based on the higher surface energy).

10 The process of the invention is exemplified and described with reference to Fig. 1. Reference numeral 1 indicates an oriented thermoplastic film supplied by an unwind roller 2 and suitable idler roll(s) 3. The film 1 is fed to a nip 6 formed between a heated 15 textured roll 5 and a backing roll 4, either or both of which can be driven. The heated nip roll 5 is textured, such as a chrome plated sandblasted steel roll. The roll 5 can optionally be provided with a release surface to prevent build-up of high tack melted 20 polymer on the heated roll 5. The roll 5 can be heated by conventional means such as hot water or oil, electric resistance or induction heating.

The surface temperature of roll 5 is controlled so as to have a temperature at least 5°C above the film 1 25 oriented polymer melt temperature, preferably at least 30°C for chromed rolls and generally higher for release coated roll surfaces. The nip contact surface area of the film 1 with the heated roll 5 is generally very small, from about 1 to 10 mm, preferably 2 to 5 mm, 30 however a larger contact area can be used if the film 1 speed is proportionally increased. The film 1 speed through the nip 6 is preferably at least 50 feet (15M) per minute, and more preferably at least 75 feet (23M) per minute. The preferred contact time between the 35 film and the heated nip contact area is less than about 20 milliseconds (ms) and preferably less than about 15 ms, down to 5 ms and less. At contact times greater

- 6 -

than about 20 ms the treated film layer(s) will have the tendency to oxidize and severely degrade the tensile properties of the film or film layer. This will lead to a film that will not heat seal adequately and 5 may break in the nip. The above described preferred conditions are dependent to some degree on the polymer that forms film 1. Polymers with different viscoelastic properties, rheological properties or thermal conductivity properties may require more or 10 less exposure to the heated roll 5. The preferred conditions described above are primarily with respect to isotactic polypropylene and similar polymers, copolymers and blends.

The backing roll 4 and the heated roll 5 are set 15 to provide a nip pressure sufficient to ensure substantially continuous contact between the film surface being treated and the heated roll 5 (a limited amount of small or microscopic non-contact points between the heated roll 5 and the film 1 is not 20 undesirable and may contribute to clean release of the film from heated roll 5). The pressure required to do this is generally less than the pressure used in a conventional embossing treatment. The high temperature of roll 5 lowers the viscosity of a surface layer of 25 polymer on film 1 sufficient to allow limited viscous flow of the heated polymer into contact with heated nip roll 5 at low pressures. Pressures as low as 0.2 to 10 pounds per linear inch (PLI) (0.09-4.56 kg per linear cm) have been found to be sufficient. At nip pressures 30 greater than 10 PLI, the film has a tendency to distort, creating edge creping. The backing roll 4 is preferably cooled to prevent heat buildup in the nip 6. Backing roll 4 can also be provided with a thin deformable or elastic coating (such as silicone rubber 35 with a durometer hardness of less than about 80 Shore A) to better ensure contact between the film 1 surface and the textured heated roll 5.

- 7 -

Drive roll 7 drives a nip provided between roll 7 and roll 8, one of which is preferably coated with a silicone rubber. Rewind roll 9 is also driven, possibly by drive roll 7.

5 The film 1 is a semi-crystalline polymer that has been subjected to orientation in at least one direction to provide non-isotropic behavior in the film. This orientation is conventional and will not be described here.

10 The orientation and crystallization of the polymer in film 1 is retained in the treated surface layer, however at lower levels, as is depicted in the GWAX traces in Figs. 2 and 3. The level of orientation retained in the treated layer is generally low but 15 still present. In the GWAX traces of Figs. 2 and 3 this retention of orientation is apparent by the differences in relative intensity for the two major peaks, which are generally of equal size if there is no orientation in the polymer layer tested. Crystalline structure is 20 retained to a considerable extent (up to 60 to 96%) as determined by GWAX intensity and patterns (0.5° and 1.0°). No new crystalline peaks are typically formed, indicating the lack of change in crystalline structure or the creation of a purely amorphous polymer in the 25 surface layer, as in U.S. Patent Nos. 4,822,451 or 3,394,045. The 0.5° Glancing Wide Angle X-Ray diffraction pattern (GWAX) generally will show retention of at least 5-10 percent of the untreated face crystallinity, preferably at least 50 percent and 30 up to 70 to 95 percent.

The crystalline size of the treated surface layer polymer is significantly reduced, coupled with the reduction in the overall degree of crystallinity and orientation. This is apparent from the decrease in 35 softening point temperature of the treated surface polymer layer compared to the untreated bulk polymer of film 1. The lowering of the treated surface layer

- 8 -

polymer softening point is demonstrated by significant self-adhesion bond strength of treated films, at the treated film surface layers, at heat seal temperatures 5°C, and more, below the melting or softening point of 5 the untreated oriented polymer of film 1. Films with treated surface layer(s) can exhibit self-adherence bond strength values at these lower heat seal temperatures, on the order of or higher than the bond strengths obtained with the untreated film welded at or 10 near its softening point. The treated film can therefore be heat sealed without effecting the orientation and crystallinity of the untreated bulk polymer and without the associated loss in film strength at the joint as caused by welding. Adhesion 15 of the invention treated film, at the treated surface layer, to other surfaces, such as polyolefins and copolymers, is also increased at these lower heat seal temperatures.

Although the crystalline structure of the treated 20 surface layer is altered by the rapid topical heating of the film to temperatures well in excess of the melting point of the oriented polymer, the crystalline structure and associated properties are not lost as in conventional heat treatment. Further, the invention 25 treatment process limits the penetration of the treatment to a surface layer having a thickness of less than about 20 microns(μ m), preferably less than 15 microns, such that the treated layer is less than about 50 percent of the total film thickness and preferably 30 less than 20 percent. This limits the loss of the orientated bulk polymer properties in the final treated film. The invention treatment has also been discovered to minimize polymer degradation and the associated creation of oxidized species, either on the film as 35 treated, or by transfer of melted polymer to the textured heat treatment roll and back to the film.

- 9 -

The provision of a textured surface on the heated roll 5 in contact with the film 1 surface has been found to inhibit or prevent transfer of melted polymer to the roll, particularly with conventional chromed surfaces. The texture depth (Ra) is generally at least about 10 micro-inch(0.3 μ m), and preferably about 20 micro-inch(0.5 μ m), but less than 400 micro-inch(10.2 μ m). Use of higher Ra or deeper textured rolls can result in uneven treatment of the film while lower Ra value rolls can result in film or polymer sticking to the roll. The use of release agent coatings, resistant to the high temperatures of the roll, are also advantageous to prevent polymer adhesion with certain high tack polymers. Suitable release treatments include Teflon™ and other fluorochemical coatings.

The texture on the heated roll 5 is at least indirectly transferred to the surface layer of film 1 resulting in increased texturing and associated at least in part with a reduction in percent gloss at 60°, down to 30% and less, preferably to 15% and less. The gloss generally can be from 3 to 50%, however is preferably from 5 to 30%. The Ra values for the textured treated surfaces range from 20 to 500 micro-inch (μ inch)(0.5-12.7 μ m), preferably from 50 to 400 μ inch(1.3-10.2 μ m). Lower Ra values are not significant and higher Ra values are difficult to obtain while still obtaining effective continuous surface layer treatment at the desired thicknesses. A peak count of at least 50 peaks/inch(20 peaks/cm) is desirable, with 100 to 400(39-157 peaks/cm) being preferred for a textured surface (measured as defined below). The highest texturing and reduction in gloss are obtained with non-release coated (e.g., chromed) heated roll surfaces, however, suitable release coatings may have to be employed with some polymers to avoid sticking of molten polymer to the heated roll and still obtain

- 10 -

preferred texturing. Surface texturing of the treated surface layer is often demanded for uses where high gloss is not desirable, such as certain adhesive tape backings, or where the, e.g., film surface is coated.

5 The invention surface texturing is sufficient to satisfy the texturing requirements for these typical uses, without the typical undesired chemical modification of the exterior surface layer, as one obtains with the heat treatments of U.S. Patent Nos. 10 3,394,045 or 4,428,720 or the surface treatments summarized in Table 1 of U.S. Patent No. 4,822,451.

The polymers suitable for the invention treatment are orientable thermoplastic polymers, generally semi-crystalline thermoplastic polymers such as polyolefins (e.g., polypropylene or polyethylene), polyesters, polyamides and the like. The polymer need only be capable of being heated to a suitable temperature above its melting point without sticking or transferring polymer to the heated roll at the high processing speeds of the invention process. Polyolefins are generally well suited, particularly polypropylene and copolymers, to the invention process without sticking to the heated roll. Certain polyesters, however, are of a higher tack when melted and tend to stick to the heated roll. Further, due to the relatively higher melt temperatures of these polyesters, conventional release agents generally cannot be used on the roll without undergoing degradation.

30 Due to the treated surface layer thicknesses (below 10 microns in some cases) the process can be used to treat very thin film or fiber webs (e.g., below 5 mils (100 μ m), down to 1 to 3 mils (25-75 μ m), if desired, without effecting the bulk properties of the oriented polymer of film 1 to any significant extent. 35 The texture level of the heated treatment surface on, e.g., roll 5 should be matched to the treatment layer thickness, as determined by treatment temperature and

- 11 -

exposure duration, to ensure substantially continuous contact between the melt phase of the surface layer and the heated textured surface during treatment.

The invention described above with respect to Fig. 5 1 is applicable to other webs or articles or could be practiced by other means. Further, the invention is exemplified by the following examples which set forth the currently contemplated preferred embodiments.

10 Examples

Example 1

This example describes a one to two mil(25-50 μm) thick film of biaxially oriented polypropylene (M.P. 170°C) that was rapidly passed over a heated TEFLONM 15 polymer coated roller. The roller was heated to a surface temperature of 250°C. The film surface visually had a textured appearance.

Example 2

This example describes a one mil(25 μm) thick film 20 of biaxially orientated polypropylene (BOPP) polymer (M.P. 170°C) that was passed over a heated TEFLONM (DuPont 958-203) polymer coated (1.5 mil, 38 μm , thick, polished to 30-50 micro-inch, 0.8-1.3 μm , Ra) roller at a speed of 75 feet per minute (fpm) (23 m/minute). The 25 roller was heated to a surface temperature of 260°C. The web contacted about 2-4 mm of the roll surface for a total contact time of about 3-5 milliseconds. The film's surface finish was measured to be 57 micro-inch(1.4 μm) Ra with 105 peaks/inch(41 peaks/cm).

30 Measured using a Surtronic 3 Profilometer, (available from Taylor-Hosson, Leicester, England), #1502 stylus, long stroke, 50 bandwidth.

This film was tested for its auto adhesion using a heat sealing press set at 40 pounds/inch²(3Kg/cm²) and 1 35 second. The first noted bond strength (t-peel ASTM D1876-72) was at 300°F (149°C) and was about 3.4 pounds/inch(0.6Kg/cm²). An untreated film's first noted

- 12

autoadhesion was at 340°F (171°C) and was about 0.3 pounds per inch (0.05 Kg/cm) using a 180 degree peel test as described below.

Counterexample 3

5 A one mil thick film of biaxially oriented polypropylene (M.P. 170°C) was treated by passing the film at a web speed of 30 fpm (9m/min) over a course-finished plasma coated roll (Plasma Coatings Inc., #315), 80-100 μ -inch(2-2.5 μ m) Root Mean Squared (RMS) 10 finish heated to a temperature of from about 280°C to 290°C, with a roll outer surface temperature of from about 250°C to 260°C. The web contacted about 2-4 mm of the roll surface giving a total roll contact time of about 2 ms. The surface finish was measured to be 435 15 micro-inch(11 μ m) Ra with 75 peaks/inch(30 peaks/cm). The depth of the surface treatment was viewed from an edge-on perspective of a Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) and appeared to be close to the thickness of the film, or approximately 25 microns. This film retained 20 little of the bulk orientation of the original film.

Example 4

The film of example 2 was treated using a grit-blasted, chromed steel roll (Ultra Plating, Inc., 70 micro-inch(1.8 μ m) Ra, 200-300 peaks/inch(79-118 25 peaks/cm)) at a web speed of 150 fpm(46 m/min) and surface temperatures of from about 190 to about 200°C. About 2-4 mm of the roll was contacted by the web giving a total roll contact time of about 12 ms. The thus treated film has a surface finish of 70 micro- 30 inch(1.8 μ m) Ra with 230 peaks/inch(91 peaks/cm). The depth of the surface treatment of the film cross-section was measured by SEM to be about 4-5 microns. The percent gloss was measured to be 15 using a Gardner Gloss meter at a 60° angle, which would be considered a 35 matte finished film.

The film surfaces, treated and untreated, were measured for crystallinity by GWAX as described in

Physical Review Letters, 66(9), p 1181-1184 (1991) with both faces tested along the same axis relative to the orientation direction. At 1°, the treated layer had 22% lower crystallinity than the untreated film face 5 with 58% lower crystallinity at 0.5° GWAX. The GWAX peaks 110 [13.5°(2θ)] and 040 and 130 [17 and 18.5(2θ)] were also asymmetrical on both faces indicating crystalline orientation of the polymer at both faces. The Example 2 film was similarly tested and displayed 10 12% and 50% lower crystallinity of the treated face at 1.0° and 0.5°, respectively. (See Figs. 2 and 3 which show the Example 2 scan traces where 21 and 31 are the untreated faces and 22 and 32 are the treated faces for 1.0 degree and 0.5 degree, respectively. The traces 15 are of intensity vs. 2-Theta.)

The textured face of this film was also laminated to a blown high density polyethylene film (2 mil(51 μ m), Consolidated Thermoplastics) in a heat sealing press set at 30 pounds per inch²(2 Kg/cm²) and 300°F(149°C) 20 for 1.5 seconds. The samples were anchored using a double coated tape and a rolldown of 4.5 lbs(2.1 Kg) and subjected to an 180° peel test at a peel rate of 12 inch/minute(30 cm/min), giving a peel force of 250 grams/inch(0.98 Kg/cm). An untreated film, similarly 25 laminated to this same blown film, gave a peel force value of 10 grams/inch(0.04Kg/cm).

Example 5

The film of Example 2 was treated by passing the film over a grit-blasted chromed steel roll (Ultra 30 Plating, Inc., 50 micro-inch(1.3 μ m) Ra, 200-300 peaks/inch(79-118 peaks/cm)) at a web speed of 150 fpm(46 m/min) and surface temperatures of from about 190° to 200°C. About 2-4 mm of the roll was in contact with the web. The treated thickness was measured by 35 SEM and found to be from about 3 to about 7 microns. The surface roughness was measured to be 61 micro-inch(1.6 μ m) Ra, 260 peaks/inch(102 peaks/cm). The

- 14

percent gloss, measured at 60°, was found to be 14. This gave the film a matte finished appearance.

Example 6

5 The film of example 2 was treated by passing the film over a grit-blasted chromed steel roll (Ultra Plating, Inc., 35 micro-inch(0.9 μ m) Ra, 200-300 peaks/in(79-118 peaks/cm)) at a web speed of 200 fpm(61 m/min) and surface temperatures of from about 190° to 200°C. About 2-4 mm of the roll was in contact with 10 the web. The treated thickness was measured by SEM and found to be from about 3 to about 6 microns. The surface roughness was measured to be 54 micro-inch(1.4 μ m) Ra, 260 peaks/inch(102 peaks/cm). The percent gloss, measured at 60°, was found to be 14. 15 This gave the film a matte finished appearance. This film was not uniform due to sticking of the film to the roll surface which was due to the low Ra value of the heated roll.

Comparative Example 7

20 The film of example 2 was treated in a manner as taught in U.S. Patent 4,495,124. By passing the one mil biaxially orientated polypropylene polymer film over the highly polished, chromed steel roll (Ultra Plating, Inc., 8-10 micro-inch(0.2-0.26 μ m) finish) at 25 web speed of 30 fpm(9 m/min) with a roll surface temperature of about 180°C. No material could be treated because the film stuck to the heated roll surface in the nip. This dwell time is similar to the fastest dwell times described in the above patent. The 30 process as described in this patent may well be suited to thick, uniaxially oriented webs but was not found suitable for treating thin, biaxially or uniaxially oriented webs to provide heat sealable oriented material. 35 The various modifications and alterations of this invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and spirit of this

- 15

invention, and this invention should not be restricted to that set forth herein for illustrative purposes.

- 16 -

WE CLAIM:

1. A thin heat sealable oriented thermoplastic web comprising a fiber, film or film layer, said web polymer having a crystalline or semi-crystalline structure and having a heat sealable treated surface layer or layer region of the same polymer, said treated surface layer or layer region being from about 1 to 15 microns thick and having a similar crystalline structure, and a softening point at least 3°C below that of the untreated fiber, film, or film layer, polymer.

2. The thermoplastic web of claim 1 comprising a film or film layer, wherein the treated surface layer or region polymer has a softening point temperature at least 5°C below that of the untreated web polymer, and the web polymer comprises a polyolefin polymer, copolymer or blend.

3. The thermoplastic web of claim 1 wherein the treated surface layer or region polymer has a softening point temperature at least 5°C below that of the untreated web polymer and has at least 5% lower crystallinity than the untreated polymer as measured by Glancing Wide Angle X-Ray Diffraction.

4. The thermoplastic web of claim 2 wherein the treated surface layer or region polymer has 30 to 95% lower crystallinity than the untreated polymer, and the polyolefin comprises a polypropylene polymer or copolymer.

5. The thermoplastic web of any of claims 1-4 wherein the surface layer or region comprises 5 to 100% of at least one outer surface of said film or film layer.

- 17 -

6. The thermoplastic web of any of claims 1-4 wherein the surface layer or region has less than 1% oxygen at the outer surface thereof.

5 7. The thermoplastic web of any of claims 1-4 wherein the surface layer or region has an Ra value of from about 20-500 μ inch, a peak count of at least 50 peaks/inch at 50 bandwidth as defined herein and a gloss of from 3 to 50%.

10

8. The thermoplastic web of any of claims 1-4 further comprising a layer of pressure-sensitive adhesive on at least one outer face thereof.

15

9. The thermoplastic web of any of claims 1-4 wherein the film or film layer has a thickness of less than 5 mils.

20

10. A process for forming a heat sealable surface layer or region on an oriented film or film layer of crystalline or semi-crystalline polymer comprising the steps of:

25

(a) providing an oriented film or film layer of a crystalline or semi-crystalline polymer,

30

(b) contacting at least a region of one outer surface of said oriented film or film layer with a heated textured surface at a temperature above the melting point of said oriented polymer for a time sufficient to treat a layer of said film to a thickness of no greater than 15 microns wherein the film is contacted with a heated textured roll with a backing nip at a pressure sufficient to ensure substantially

35

- 18 -

continuous contact between the film and the heated textured roll.

11. The process of claim 10 wherein the heated
5 textured roll has an Ra of at least 20 μ inch and is
coated with a release coating.

12. The process of claim 11 wherein the backing
nip has a durometer hardness of less than about 80
10 Shore A.

13. The process of claim 11 wherein the film is
in contact with the heated roll for about 1 to 10 mm
when the film is moving at at least 50 feet per minute.
15

14. The process of any of claims 10-13 wherein the
film is in contact with the heated roll for 20 ms or
less.

20 15. The process of any of claims 10-13 wherein the
film is in contact with the heated roll for 5 ms or
less.

16. The process of any of claims 10-13 wherein
25 the film is treated to a thickness of at least 1
micron, said treated layer having the same, but lower,
crystalline state as the untreated polymer.

17. The process of any of claims 10-13 wherein
30 the heated roll temperature is at least 5°C higher than
the melting point temperature of the untreated film or
film layer oriented polymer provided in step (a).

18. The process of any of claims 10-13 wherein
35 the heated roll temperature is at least 30°C higher
than the melting point temperature of the film polymer.

1 / 3

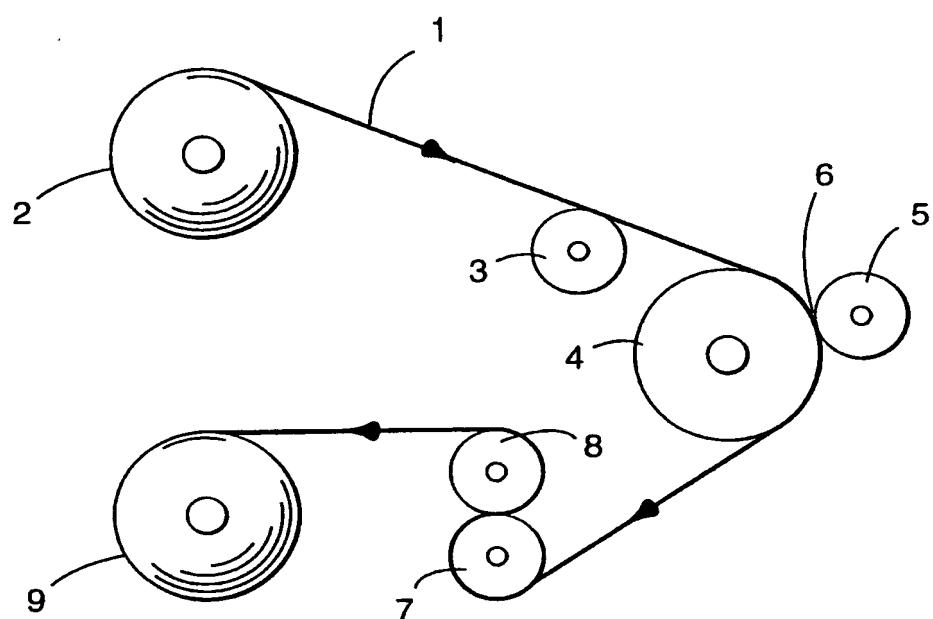
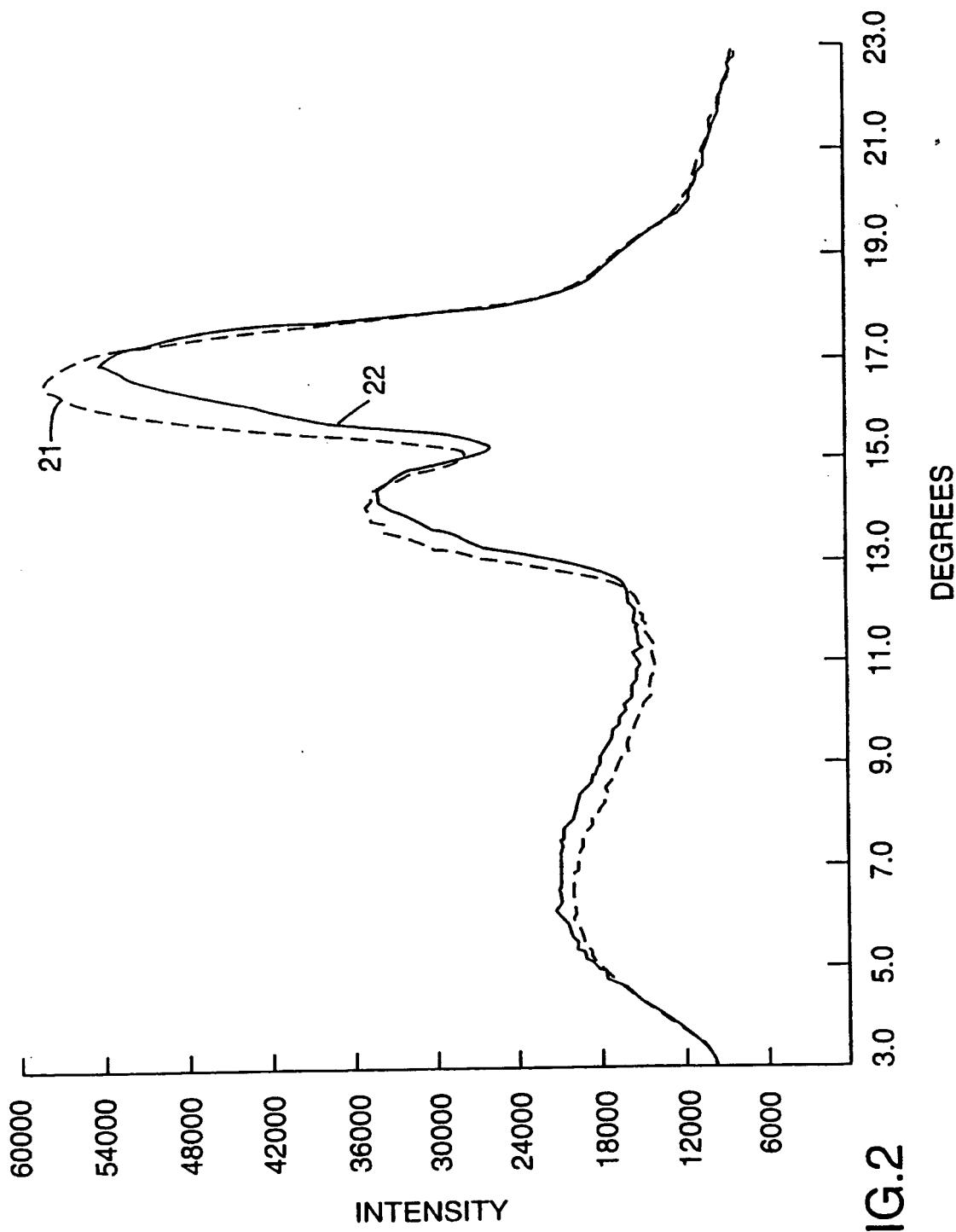


FIG.1

2 / 3



3 / 3

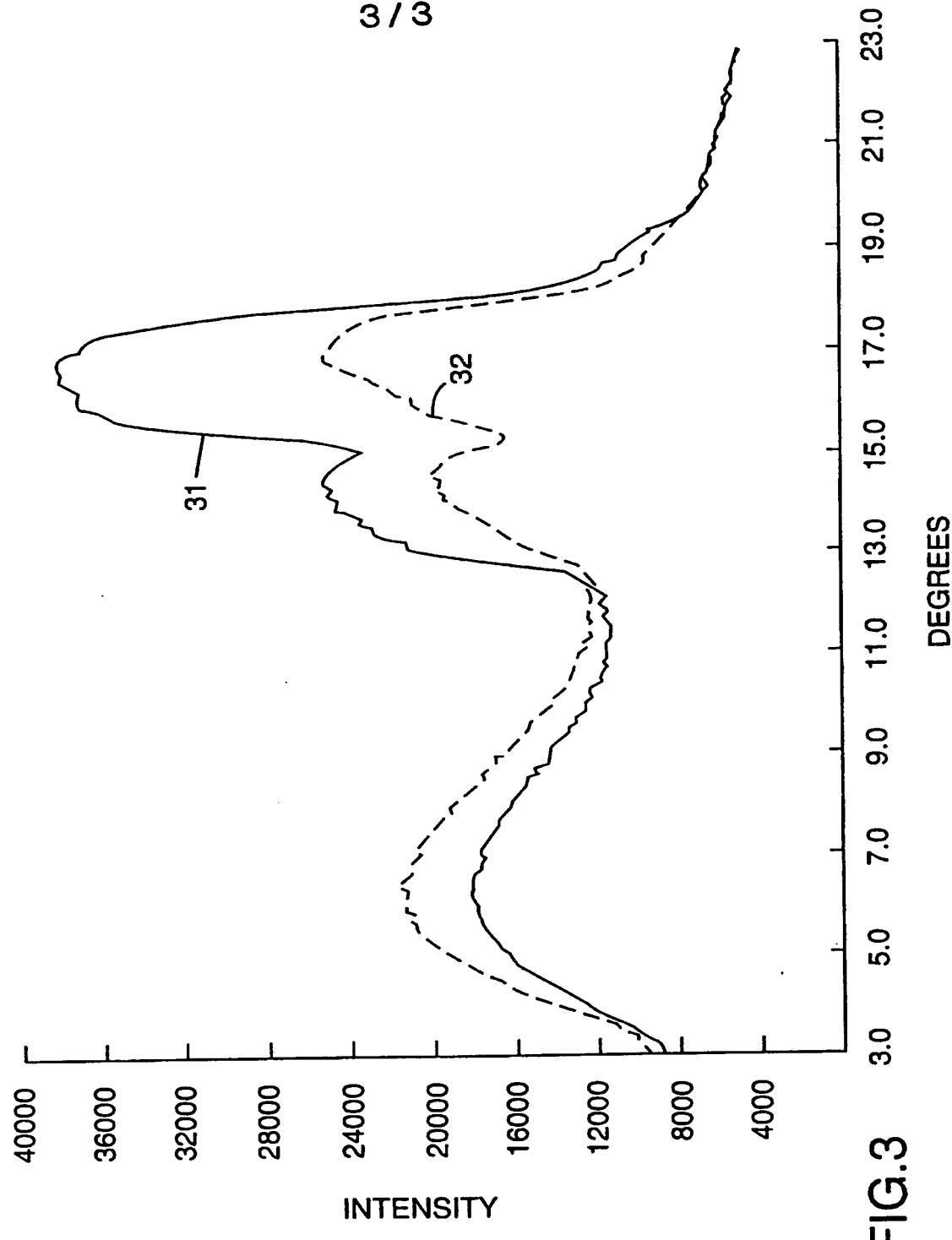


FIG. 3

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC 5 B29C59/04 B29C71/00 B29C55/00 //B29K23:00, B29L7:00

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 5 B29C

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	EP, A, 0 038 559 (SIGNODE CORPORATION) 28 October 1981 cited in the application see page 8, line 26 - line 32	10, 17, 18
Y	cited in the application see page 9, line 29 - page 10, line 5; claim 3 ---	1-5, 9
A	CH, A, 280 509 (WERNER KREIDL) 1 May 1952 see page 2, line 90 - page 3, line 10 see page 4, line 53 - line 83 see page 4, line 85 - page 5, line 7; claims 1, 5, 7, 8 ---	13-15
Y	---	1-5, 9
		-/-

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- "L" document which may throw doubt on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- "&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

2 August 1994

Date of mailing of the international search report

18.08.94

Name and mailing address of the ISA
 European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patenttaan 2
 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
 Tel. (+ 31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 cpo nl,
 Fax: (+ 31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Van Nieuwenhuize, O

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	GB,A,851 053 (THE KENDALL COMPANY) 12 October 1960 see page 1, line 68 - page 2, line 60 see page 4, line 8 - line 104 see page 6, line 9 - line 16; claims 1,26 ---	1-5,9
A	US,I,927 010 (HAROLD B. WHITFIELD ET AL) 1 October 1974 see abstract ---	7,10-12
A	EP,A,0 308 205 (ETHYL CORPORATION) 22 March 1989 see the whole document -----	7,10-13

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
EP-A-0038559	28-10-81	AU-B-	543384	18-04-85
		AU-A-	6790381	29-10-81
		CA-A-	1158009	06-12-83
		JP-B-	1013410	06-03-89
		JP-C-	1527227	30-10-89
		JP-A-	56151533	24-11-81
		US-A-	4428720	31-01-84
		US-A-	4495124	22-01-85
CH-A-280509		AT-A-	170900	
		AT-A-	189797	
		AT-A-	194137	
		AT-A-	203729	
		AT-A-	207573	
		AT-A-	212025	
		BE-A-	493292	
		DE-C-	844348	
		FR-A-	1017768	
		GB-A-	704665	
		IT-A-	464517	
		NL-C-	73233	
		NL-B-	151020	
		US-A-	2632921	
		US-A-	2746084	
GB-A-851053		NONE		
US-I-927010		NONE		
EP-A-0308205	22-03-89	DE-A-	3870372	27-05-92
		JP-A-	1110930	27-04-89
		US-A-	5024799	18-06-91
		US-A-	5108814	28-04-92